

# RESEARCH EVALUATION REPORT

**Faculty of Social Sciences and Regional Studies  
Karelian Institute**

**University of Joensuu**

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**The report begins with a series of observations and recommendations at the University level before going on to look at each unit of assessment in more detail.**

### University level

The panel concluded that the small size of the university is less of a problem than some might think and in fact has clear benefits. The small size of the university facilitates genuine multidisciplinary co-operation, weak disciplinary boundaries and low hierarchies. Similarly, the distant location of the university might at first sight look like a disadvantage, but the university has managed to successfully capitalize on its location. For example, proximity to the Russian border means that border areas offer many possibilities for different fields of study. The character of this forested, rural region has also offered avenues of investigation in which the University can specialise. Furthermore, the regional culture, geography and history of the Karelian area are a focus of study and in this respect the Karelian Institute is a particular asset to the university.

However, given the remote location of the university, there is a risk of researchers being cut off from academic activities taking place elsewhere. Therefore, the panel regards it as particularly important that the representatives of a remote small university participate in international conferences and this would need financial support. The panel considers that all research staff members and fulltime doctoral students should be given a chance to attend international conferences at least once a year.

With respect to publishing, the panel noted that despite considerable output in most departments and even many publications in English, there were not so many publications in international refereed journals, something which is increasing being seen as an indicator of research excellence. The panel recognises that in many fields, publishing at a national level is also important, but it recommends that there should be a rebalancing between publishing on national and international forums in favour of more emphasis on international refereed journals. This means that more resources should be devoted to careful research and publishing especially with respect to placing articles where they will have maximum international impact. This can be done only if the University underwrites the costs of the language-checking for its research staff.

The panel noted that there seems to be a relatively high number of doctoral students, a large proportion of whom are inactive. The university should, therefore, monitor the number of its doctoral students and the extent to which they were active. The panel also noted that there

were sometimes very large numbers of postgraduate students per supervisor, although since not all were active, the burden of supervision is unpredictable and falls unevenly on staff. In an ideal case one professor should have a maximum of five doctoral students and these should be active ones. Thus, the annual intake of doctoral students should be limited to make it correspond with the available supervisory capacity. The instruction of post-graduate students should be standardized by having everyone signed a clear contract. Furthermore, the panel recommends that each doctoral student should be assigned at least two qualified supervisors. This happens already in some departments but not in others. The university should look for ways to encourage the post-graduate students to complete their work in a reasonable time (i.e. four active years). The university may want to consider the matter in the light of the Bologna process.

The panel considers that the status of the licentiate degree should be thought over. Only the universities of Joensuu and Vaasa are still awarding these degrees in relatively large numbers. The panel suggests that there should be further reflection as to whether this additional qualification is a useful one in the light of current trends.

The panel observed that at some departments the number of female staff members is at a relatively low level. This is particularly true in terms of teaching and research staff, although less so among the post-graduate students. This fact should be subject to continual review with a view to improving the situation. The panel considers it important that the statistics on the gender balance should be discussed on an annual basis.

The panel noted that all departments have links to centres of competence, and they have benefited from the work of those centres. The centres of competence seem to be a concept that works well, and therefore the panel recommends that the centres should also be developed and financed in the future.

The panel noted the uneven quality of the background reports. Some of the reports contained inaccuracies which affect the validity and reliability of the data. The departments evidently used different definitions in counting their results. Some data was also missing, and there were even the wrong numbers reported in some tables. In addition, the panel members were not certain that all the articles listed under a title refereed article have undergone the peer-review process. The recommendation is, therefore, that it should not be the task of individual researchers to report their publications but that a centralized and standardised control practice should be initiated. With respect to all the numerical information gathered for these reports it is important for the University to have accurate and standardised performance indicators with which to measure academic activity and monitor it over the longer term. At present it is difficult to judge the performance of departments with much accuracy because a lot of data seems to be missing even from the indicators that the University chose to present. In addition, the monitoring of the number of female staff at different levels should be a standard procedure, although it was not among the indicators that the University chose to present. With regard to measuring the impact of research the panel noted that Thompson is not suitable for the fields under evaluation but ERIH and Harzing's indexes could be used with caution (high impacts and citation indexes tell about relevance but low ones do not reflect absence of quality or relevance). There is currently a discussion at international level about the relevance of different measurements for academic endeavour, especially for Arts and Social Sciences, so the University of Joensuu should ensure that its output and impact measures reflect international practices but are also sensitive to the particular character of the University departments and institutes. The panel in practice used the Harzing's index in enabling it to

compare the profile of research at Joensuu with that elsewhere. One indicator that might be reformulated is that of researcher and teacher mobility. The present two-week unit means that much of the mobility that does in fact take place may not be recorded. The panel recommends that one week could be better for that purpose.

The panel observed that the research strategies of the departments were not, to a large extent, well formulated, and most of them were neither theoretically nor future-oriented.

### **Faculty level**

Measures should be taken to improve the research infrastructure of the departments. The staff members at the departments complain of being overburdened by administrative and teaching work, and for that reason they are not always able to apply for external funding, which increasingly requires administrative duties. The panel recommends that at the faculty level there is need for a person (for example a vice-dean) to be responsible for research policy.. The task could be assigned to someone's duties. In addition, at a University level, there should be administrative personnel available to seek out and distribute information about relevant research funding at a national and international level, to help with the submission of proposals (which are increasingly electronic and increasingly have to be carried out centrally by the University in any case) and with the detailed review of proposals to ensure that they fit all the required criteria. Since the administration of international grants is increasingly bureaucratic, having central staff who can assist in this process would help to enable researchers to spend more time carrying out and publishing the research that they produce.

The panel finds it a good practice to allocate funds to those doctoral students who are starting or completing their studies.

The panel has noted in general that the staff complained of not having enough time for research. The research staff would certainly benefit from a sabbatical system as is normal in most universities. Hence the Faculty could encourage the departments to make their own internal arrangements to reorganize the teaching and other activities in a manner that one staff member at the time could concentrate on research or make extended research visits to other (for example, foreign) institutions for a certain period of time.

In relation to recruitment, the panel sees the international Master's degree programmes as a means to attract students from larger areas than just from eastern Finland and commends the successful introduction of a number of these programmes in different departments.

## **DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY**

### **1. RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Department of Geography has a fair amount of external funding. The proportion, 24,5 % of the budget, is however below the average of the University of Joensuu (approx. 30 %). Funding received from the Academy of Finland is on the rise, but since 2004 the department has not been able to attract EU money to the same extent as in the past. The Department of Geography could broaden its use of funding sources (for example from TEKES). Research facilities are appropriate, and the department has invested in new equipment, in particular in the area of Geo-informatics. During the evaluation period, the department has gained three temporary professors in addition to its three permanent professorial positions. The gender composition of staff is predominantly male. The staff members employed in the department have had difficulty in finding time for their own research even though one of the objectives of the 2006 reform was to reduce administrative duties at departmental level.

### **2. QUALITY OF RESEARCH AND AREAS OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE**

Human geography dominates the research of the geography department. Research in that area has for long been the backbone in Joensuu, and it continues to be so in the foreseeable future. In fact, the department has in the past produced important scholars for other universities in this area. The current strong areas appear to be border studies, social science studies on forests and the environment, and applied geo-informatics.

There is a considerable amount of publishing activity. Much attention is paid to Finnish issues, and many articles have been published in the journal *Fennia*. It is, however, often recommended that research written in English should not be published within Finland but rather in international journals. The scientific quality and the impact of the Department of Geography appears to be higher at a national level than at an international level.

The staff of the department seem to have switched from the production of stand-alone articles to articles published in compiled works or in printed conference publications, probably because of a range of international co-operative projects publishing in this way. The Department appears innovative in its major competences within border studies, forests and society-nature relations, and geo-informatics. In particular, thoughts around politics of nature are contributing to the development of a common Nordic 'school of thought' around social and cultural conceptions of nature and landscape. However, the department has not yet reached a level at which their own theoretical approaches could be propagated.

The multidisciplinary of research is a very strong advantage of the department's profile. The department has established close contacts with the Karelian Institute, and has good links to the university designated centres of competence.

### **3. RESEARCH STRATEGY**

The Department has formulated a research strategy in four points that appear focused, consistent, and reasonably specialized for a Department of its size. The strategy seems to work well, and it has been flexible, enabling it to respond to changing external research climates and initiatives. The research strategy of the Geography Department streamlines well with the University's research strategy. However, the panel finds that this strategy appears too little future-oriented in the sense that to a larger degree it reproduces what is already done than suggesting new goals and innovations within the different areas in question.

### **4. INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

The Department of Geography is an internationally active unit. It has an international staff, and it has created a community that operates in English. The department has had an impressive number of international projects (either as a co-ordinator or partner). The EU funded projects were noteworthy until 2004. The number of joint publications is relatively high. The level of activity can also be seen in the mobility figures of both the domestic and foreign teachers and researchers.

### **5. NATIONAL CO-OPERATION**

The Department of Geography has had good co-operation with the University of Oulu. It appears that the department does not co-operate so much with other domestic universities, perhaps because in Joensuu there is less emphasis on physical geography. The department has established links with other Finnish organisations and agencies some of which are present in Joensuu.

### **6. TRAINING OF THE DOCTORAL STUDENTS**

The Department of Geography is a good environment for doctoral students. The department has been successful in attracting students from outside Finland, probably due to its international master's degree programme in Human Geography. The post-graduate system could be described as informal and the doctoral students can easily approach the professors. The doctoral students are not controlled very strictly, and they are granted a fair degree of freedom so that they are themselves responsible for the progress they make. On the other hand, the doctoral students of the department have just one supervisor which might lead to student's dependency on one person. The students have good possibilities to attend conferences abroad but still not all of them have taken part in those scientific meetings. The doctoral students are more and more publishing in English.

### **7. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

The composition of the doctoral students and the milieu of postgraduate teaching are amongst the strengths of the Geography Department. Even though the remote location of Joensuu might be thought to constitute a problem, the department has made its location an advantage.

Its proximity to Russia can be considered a strength, and it offers good opportunities for case study research. The panel agrees with the department's own report that it has a "methodological approach that examines local issues, though always through the prism of broader (global) processes, systems or networks".

Publication policy is a weakness of the department. The research strategy is also lacking theoretical specifications.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Each doctoral student should be assigned two supervisors, one of whom is the main responsible instructor.
- The research strategy of the department should be more precisely written, not just describing what has been done in the past but defining new areas, goals and innovations for the future research activity.
- The teaching staff members are mainly male. Efforts should be made to change the current situation.
- The proportion of external funding should be increased.
- More work should be published in international refereed journals.

<b>CRITERION</b>	<b>GRADE (1-7)<sup>a</sup></b>
1. Research infrastructure	5
2a. Standard of research at national level	6
2b. Standard of research at international level	5
3. Research strategy	4
4. International activities	6
5a. National co-operation	5
5b. International co-operation	6
<b>GENERAL ESTIMATION</b>	<b>6</b>

<sup>a</sup> 7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = average, 3 = somewhat below average, 2 = fair, 1 = poor

## **DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

### **1. RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE**

In the case of the department of history the panel is of the opinion that the level of external funding is appropriate. It lies at 22% over the designated period and is lower than the Joensuu average. There is no funding at all from international projects. The funding from the Academy of Finland has been on a relatively high level but recently it has decreased and continues to decline. The history department has managed to run its administration smoothly by allocating these tasks to few people. Research is prioritized. The appointment of one professor as the post-graduate studies co-ordinator is welcomed by the panel and could be a good model for other Departments. The sources on African history and the existence of the Joensuu provincial archives at the campus are positive factors facilitating the conduct of research. All in all, the research infrastructure of the history department functions well. There is a clear male preponderance in the staff.

### **2. QUALITY OF RESEARCH AND AREAS OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE**

The panel identifies Border and Russian studies and regional and environmental studies as important areas of research. Furthermore, African history is a recognized specialization of the department which draws people to Joensuu. The department of history is the leading producer of monographs in the faculty. There are clear signs of a hard-working department. History has been most successful in receiving researchers' posts from the Academy of Finland.

The history department has an impressive number of publications. Some new theories and methods have been incorporated into the research made at the department. The scientific quality of publications is more obvious at the national level than at the international level. The panel is, however, pleased to see that a reasonably large proportion of articles are international. The panel would like to see this continue. The department has established close relations in particular with the Karelian Institute. It is obvious that both institutions benefit from their co-operation.

The extent of multidisciplinary of the research is at a good level.

### **3. RESEARCH STRATEGY**

History department's research strategy is not particularly well formulated in the report, e.g. Africa is not mentioned among the research areas. However, the research strategy was more extensively presented in the oral interview with the panel. The department presented some interesting ideas concerning its future research profiles, including theoretical and methodological perspectives (members of the staff mentioned, for example, a growing focus on comparative research, discourse analysis, narrative and linguistic dimensions, etc.). There exist clear links with to the activities of the centres of competence and the members of the department expressed satisfaction with their research strategy. The research strategy of the department fits well with the strategy of the university.

#### **4. INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

The history department has not been successful in attracting international research funding and projects. The panel was not informed about how the international collaboration by the department has resulted in joint publications. However, the list of publications testifies to a high degree of international research and publication co-operation, in particular at the Nordic level and with institutions in Russia, in particular the University of Petrozavodsk and the Russian Academy of Sciences, and with colleagues in London and Namibia involved in African studies. Although the incoming teacher mobility to the department is at a high level, the panel recommends that the department should invite foreign scholars for research-related visits and encourages the department to send its young researchers abroad. Doctoral students did not feel that they benefited from the international teaching staff at the Department, so perhaps there needs to be more attention paid to the way in which the effects of the international teaching programme radiates out.

#### **5. NATIONAL CO-OPERATION**

The Department of History is represented at several national graduate schools. The department is a national centre of the study of African history. In this particular field the department co-operates with the Development Studies units at the University of Helsinki and the University of Tampere. The University of Jyväskylä is also another partner in other research projects. The department has good connections with the Karelian Institute, and the staff participate in the activities of the centres of competence.

#### **6. TRAINING OF THE DOCTORAL STUDENTS**

The Department of History treats its doctoral students well. One professor has been nominated to co-ordinate and lead post-graduate training. New activities in relation to post-graduate training have been initiated, such as Brown Bag meetings and extensive co-operation within the framework of the national post-graduate schools. The panel is satisfied with the outcome of the doctoral production at the department and hopes that there will be no significant changes in those figures. Although approximately 30 % of the post-graduate students are recruited from outside the region, the number of active students appears to be rather too home-grown and the panel would encourage the department to develop it into a place that could attract other Finnish and international fulltime students to take up their post-graduate studies in Joensuu.

#### **7. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

The focus of research activities on main areas can be considered a strength of the department. The treatment of doctoral students is good. The research infrastructure is functioning well – for example, research time is prioritized over administrative duties and the department benefits from the location of provincial archives.

The members of the department complained about being far removed from the key decision making institutions in Finland, which are mainly located in Helsinki. This means that the department is sometimes disadvantaged in the disbursement of resources and is not able to participate in important meetings. Therefore the department's contacts to civil society are thinner than they could be as the members of the staff concentrate on communication through their texts. Furthermore, the panel questions the department's policy of prioritizing monographs over articles.

The lack of international funding and the magnitude of international co-operation are clear weaknesses.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- That the recruitment base of fulltime active doctoral students should be broadened. One way of doing it would be the establishment of international master's degree programme, as in other departments.
- The department should give preference to more precisely written research strategy-defining areas and goals of innovation in its future research.
- International funding of research projects should be considered.
- The teaching staff members are mainly male. Efforts should be made to change the current situation.
- Post-graduate students should be assigned two supervisors.
- More work should be published in international refereed journals.

<b>CRITERION</b>	<b>GRADE (1-7)<sup>a</sup></b>
1. Research infrastructure	5
2a. Standard of research at national level	6
2b. Standard of research at international level	4
3. Research strategy	4
4. International activities	5
5a. National co-operation	5
5b. International co-operation	4
<b>GENERAL ESTIMATION</b>	<b>5</b>

<sup>a</sup> 7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = average, 3 = somewhat below average, 2 = fair, 1 = poor

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL POLICY

### 1. RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE

The Department of Sociology and Social Policy is a new entity which has existed for only a year. Although it is trying to develop research synergies it is not yet a department in the sense of a fully functioning single unit. Furthermore, it is the Department that is most affected by the planned merger with the University of Kuopio to create the University of Eastern Finland. This has had an effect on the research infrastructure and means that it has been difficult to plan a research strategy. Furthermore, there has been considerable staff turnover for a small department and the loss of some staff has meant the loss of research and resources. New staff have been appointed and in future some of these problems will be overcome. One strength of the department is that the staff of the department come from various backgrounds and have considerable experience in many fields. Some of the staff have substantial international reputations and the unit for Socio-Cultural Education gained a grade of excellent (5) in an Academy of Finland evaluation (the only department in Joensuu to have achieved this) although it was not awarded a Centre of Excellence.

The funding for the department looks good. Both of the disciplines represented within the department have shown themselves to be the most effective in the faculty in obtaining “other domestic funding”, which is a sign of the social relevance of their research. This is a very good achievement. However, this is not the case as far as the whole of the external funding is concerned. Sociology receives 32.5% of its resources from external funding sources and Social Policy 18%. This means that Sociology is the highest among the departments that the panel evaluated, whereas Social Policy is the lowest. The very uneven and diverse achievements of the two units make them difficult to evaluate as one unit, so the panel have evaluated each unit separately. The panel recognizes that funding from other domestic sources is at a high level in sociology, but is probably lower in social policy on account of the unfortunate personal circumstances of some staff members, especially the loss of one leading professor.

### 2. QUALITY OF RESEARCH AND AREAS OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

#### **Sociology**

Sociology of Education is particularly strong area of research at an international as well as a national level. Youth research is also notable. The unit for socio-cultural research in education has been close to get the status of a national centre of research excellence, which is a remarkable achievement. The Joensuu sociologists edit an international journal the *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology*. The sociologists publish widely in both domestic and international forums but in the latter case the panel is concerned about its continuity. It could be commented that a special “Joensuu School of Sociology” exists and the members of the department have helped to contribute to theories of the Nordic model of education which is commended by the panel. Sociologists have also utilized multidisciplinary

approaches. The sociologists have received international EU funding as well as funding from the Academy of Finland on a regular basis.

### **Social Policy**

The social policy unit is itself divided into social policy and environmental policy and these two sub-units have had different research projects and studies. No financing from either the Finnish Academy or from international research programmes is mentioned in the evaluation report, but there is research funded by government ministries and national agencies. This may improve as environmental policy starts to emerge and is in a position to compete for more of external research resources. There has also been a long tradition of aging-related study which is now finished. New areas of research excellence, such as gender and work, and ethnography, are currently being developed at the department and the most recent appointments should help to improve the research and publishing achievements of the social policy unit. The staff working on Social Policy topics have published almost entirely in Finnish until recently. The number of publications is, however, reasonable. Research in the field of social and environmental policy and some studies on work practices of caring could be considered as original. Environmental Policy is highly multidisciplinary, and there have been links between social policy and cultural studies in this respect.

## **3. RESEARCH STRATEGY**

This newly established department had no explicitly defined research document to present to the panel. This was explained by reference to the ongoing formation of the University of Eastern Finland and the wish for no radical changes in organization before the new university has come into existence. The panel is, however, of the opinion that precisely because of the reform it would have been natural to plan strategically for the future.

## **4. INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

### **Sociology**

The Sociologists have been very successful in attracting EU funding both in terms of research projects as well as Networks of Excellence and in terms of teaching exchange schemes such as Tempus. Members of the sociology unit are clearly collaborating with international partners but it is surprising that this is not reflected in the tables detailing international exchange and joint publication. This may be a problem however, with the quality of the indicators used. One important form of international co-operation is the international master's degree programme on cultural diversity taught in English, which brings potential post-graduate students to Joensuu and has proved to be a success in attracting students. Some members of the sociology unit have been very active in international organisations and in giving invited lectures abroad. Sociology has internationalised its activities by appointing an important scholar from abroad to its staff.

## **Social Policy**

The panel believes that different forms of research funding (also from abroad) could be obtained for research on environmental policy as well as social policy more generally. There appears to be no researcher mobility in social policy at all and almost no international collaboration in publishing.

## **5. NATIONAL CO-OPERATION**

### **Sociology**

The sociologists have engaged in the activities of a national post-graduate school. They have carried out research in co-operation with the Universities of Helsinki and Turku. They also work closely with colleagues in the Faculty of Education at the University of Joensuu and sociologists participate actively in one of the centres of competence.

### **Social Policy**

The staff working in Social Policy have collaborated with the University of Jyväskylä on cultural issues. They also take part in the activities of the centre of competence.

## **6. TRAINING OF THE DOCTORAL STUDENTS**

The number of Sociology doctorates has been relatively low compared with other departments but their amount is double in social policy. There is a small number of international doctoral students in Joensuu working in the field of sociology. Post-graduate students of both subjects have normally two supervisors. The low completion rate might be because there appears to be too many post-graduate students for some of the professors (around 15). The doctoral students are a quite a local group but with quite diverse backgrounds.

## **7. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

Sociology has a very strong research record and has been very effective in obtaining funding, both nationally and abroad. Social policy has been better at tapping local resources from agencies and ministries. In Sociology internationalisation is at good level and there is a clear focus on the Sociology of Education, although there is less evidence of internationalisation in social policy. Social policy is evidently overcoming the state of abasement it had some years ago.

The publication profile of Social Policy is too nationally biased. The number of international joint publications is low. Furthermore, at a departmental level there is considerable unevenness in their publication and public profile as measured by impact indicators. This department has both the highest as well as the lowest impact scores in the whole Faculty.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Social Policy should attract more external research funding.
- The department should give preference to a research strategy, which seems to be of particular importance for the department in the forthcoming development of the University of Eastern Finland.
- More post-graduate students could be recruited from other Finnish universities and from abroad.
- More work should be published in international refereed journals.

### SOCIOLOGY

CRITERION	GRADE (1-7) <sup>a</sup>
1. Research infrastructure	5
2a. Standard of research at national level	6
2b. Standard of research at international level	6
3. Research strategy	-
4. International activities	4
5a. National co-operation	3
5b. International co-operation	3
<b>GENERAL ESTIMATION</b>	<b>5</b>

<sup>a</sup> 7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = average, 3 = somewhat below average, 2 = fair, 1 = poor

### SOCIAL POLICY

CRITERION	GRADE (1-7) <sup>a</sup>
1. Research infrastructure	4
2a. Standard of research at national level	5
2b. Standard of research at international level	3
3. Research strategy	-
4. International activities	3
5a. National co-operation	4
5b. International co-operation	3
<b>GENERAL ESTIMATION</b>	<b>4</b>

<sup>a</sup> 7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = average, 3 = somewhat below average, 2 = fair, 1 = poor

## **THE KARELIAN INSTITUTE**

### **1. RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Karelian Institute has been very successful in raising external funding. Altogether 49% – almost half – of the funding comes from external sources, which is a remarkable achievement. However, the university funding, which is higher than in the departments, has been very important in maintaining stability and continuity. Members of the Karelian Institute also teach courses and supervise post-graduate students for the departments. The organization into research groups seems to reflect very well the priorities of the Institute. The Karelian Institute has a multidisciplinary atmosphere and high-quality staff, although until recently few have been at a very senior level. The number of permanent female staff members is low. The staff of the Institute spends a lot of time on project management because they have many large international projects. Hence, the panel detects a potential conflict in the allocation of time resources between research and administrative tasks. The Institute's staff commented favourably on their new facilities at the centre of the campus. The panel visited these facilities, which were very impressive. The new location in the centre of the campus should help to promote integration into the University.

### **2. QUALITY OF RESEARCH AND AREAS OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE**

The Karelian Institute has developed several areas of research excellence which are recognized internationally. Those are mainly related to border and regional studies, fields, which have expanded over the years. They have an unexceptionally high number of international contacts and projects. The staff in the Institute have been very successful in obtaining research funding from competitive sources and their relative funding from the Academy of Finland (compared to the budgetary funding) has been slightly higher than at the departments.

Despite the high number of publications produced by the Karelian Institute, the panel found it surprising that the researchers of the Institute do not rank high on the impact factors used. This is partly for structural reasons. Due to the heavy involvement of their staff in international projects, there has been an emphasis on publishing in edited volumes. They have an impressive record of publishing in international joint publications, but these are not as prestigious as refereed journals. Nevertheless, many of those edited volumes are international. The Karelian Institute has various avenues for disseminating their research. The Institute has a good record of applied research for local agencies and organizations and this research is channelled through their sub-unit: Spatia. The regional impact in terms of general public and policy makers is at high level.

Researchers at the Karelian Institute have developed a new innovative, multi-dimensional view of border studies. They have produced a lot of empirical and applied research in a multidisciplinary manner, and have incorporated the comparative aspect into their research by working in international joint projects.

### **3. RESEARCH STRATEGY**

The research strategy of the Karelian Institute is well defined, and even to some extent future-oriented. The panel appreciates the way in which the Institute has tried to develop plans for the future taking into account the proposed fusion with the University of Eastern Finland. Among the new research areas to be developed in anticipation of the frame of the new university are work and welfare issues. However, the panel hoped to have seen some new perspectives and theoretical innovations included in this strategy. The research strategy of the Karelian Institute is fully consistent with that of the University.

### **4. INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

The international activity of the Karelian Institute is at a high general level, and they have been able to attract considerable international research funding and research projects. The Institute has engaged in numerous international projects, and the collaboration has produced scores of joint publications. On the other hand, the international researcher exchange is at a very low level, partly because the unit of analysis is only two weeks and international researchers generally come for less than that.

### **5. NATIONAL CO-OPERATION**

The Karelian Institute co-operates actively at the national level, including its commissioned work for local agencies and organisations. The co-operation within the University of Joensuu is mutually beneficial. There are lots of linkages and mobility between the Karelian Institute and the departments, also in the framework of the centres of competence. International co-operation of the Institute is at an excellent level.

### **6. TRAINING OF THE DOCTORAL STUDENTS**

The panel agrees that a heavy work load in projects might cause conflicts of interest as far as doctoral studies are concerned. The panel noted positively that the doctoral students working at the Karelian Institute had generally more supervisors than those working at other departments. Special supervisory teams bring expertise and the doctoral students benefit from the work of the teams. The panel noted and welcomed the fact that the Karelian Institute has been able to attract doctoral students from outside Finland.

### **7. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

The volume of project acquisition, a long tradition in multidisciplinary, extensive national and international collaboration and high publication output are strengths of the Karelian Institute. The researchers of the Karelian Institute publish surprisingly little in international refereed journals. Because of project acquisition and management duties, there seems to be heavy cross-pressures on the staff time having an impact on their possibilities to conduct research work and to publish it in peer-reviewed journals.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Researcher mobility from and to the Karelian Institute could be more active.
- The permanent staff should be freed to some extent from project management to allow them to do research.
- The Karelian Institute should find ways to improve the gender composition of its staff.
- More work should be published in international refereed journals.

<b>CRITERION</b>	<b>GRADE (1-7)<sup>a</sup></b>
1. Research infrastructure	6
2a. Standard of research at national level	6
2b. Standard of research at international level	5
3. Research strategy	4
4. International activities	5
5a. National co-operation	6
5b. International co-operation	6
<b>GENERAL ESTIMATION</b>	<b>6</b>

<sup>a</sup> 7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = average, 3 = somewhat below average, 2 = fair, 1 = poor

Joensuu 1 October, 2008

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Jorma Sipilä  
Chancellor, Professor  
Chairman of the Panel

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Claire Wallace  
Professor  
Vice-Chairman of the Panel

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Einar Niemi  
Professor  
Member of the Panel

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Kirsten Simonsen  
Professor  
Member of the Panel